

## Apprenticeship quality? Point this Way *See page 2*



Geoff Russell, CEO of the Skills Funding Agency points to David Way, CEO of the National Apprenticeship Service, at the BIS Select Committee, chaired by Adrian Bailey



Monday 30 April 2012

[www.feweek.co.uk](http://www.feweek.co.uk)

### College job losses



FE Week investigates significant college plans for redundancies

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FE Week interviews the 157 Group policy & communications officer

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## Dismay over 'serious breach of contract'

**FE Week Exclusive**

Nick Summers

@SummersNicholas

Provider loses contract over 'significant errors and missing data', leaving one hundred jobs at risk

A provider has had its contract terminated by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) after an investigation into "significant irregularities" in evidence submitted to support funding claims and payments.

However, NTQUK, which delivers apprenticeships in health and social care, customer service and business administration, disagree with the decision and face arbitration following an unsuccessful dispute resolution panel.

Allan Bate, the chairman of NTQUK, says that should arbitration fail, the company, which employs around 100 people, could be forced to close.

The investigation into the provider began in February 2012. The SFA found claims, submitted over two years, which failed to meet the terms of its contract with the Agency and included "the funding requirements incorporated within that contract."

The SFA told FE Week that NTQUK has "not submitted the requisite evidence in the past two months" to support their funding claims.

They added: "As there are signifi-

cant errors and missing data which constitute a serious breach of contract, the Agency has had no option but to terminate NTQUK's contract in order to protect public funding and learners interests.

"The Agency will be seeking repayment of funding and will seek to place learners with new providers."

But the judgement has been met with dismay by Mr Bate, who said the SFA have made the decision based on incomplete data.

Mr Bate said the Agency's investigators refuse to look at E Track, the electronic filing and learner record system used by the company.

When inspectors visited NTQUK's offices in February at the start of the investigation, Mr Bate said they "set them up with a laptop so they could access the system, but the lead investigator said 'well I've come across this somewhere else before but I've got no idea what it's all about'."

He added: "They've never ever, during those three months, interrogated the system where all the evidence is kept."

The SFA investigators needed around 5,000 learner files and took

the majority of them in the two-and-a-half days spent at the premises.

NTQUK were then notified in March that their contract with the SFA had been terminated.

"Eventually they got to a position where they had studied at least what we had given to them and they told us that there was a lot of evidence they couldn't find - naturally because they hadn't looked - and on that basis there was a gross breach of contract, so they were going to take the contract away," Mr Bate said.

However, a letter, seen by FE Week and sent to NTQUK by Peter Marsh, director of the SFA Thames Valley area relationship team last week, says "there was every opportunity for NTQUK to have provided any documentation stored electronically."

"The investigation team reported that in the initial meeting with Sam Sawyer, the then CEO, and other members of staff representing NTQUK that there was clear disagreement between the CEO and the Compliance Manager about the storage of documentation and the full use of the E tracker system,"

he said.

Following the decision to terminate their contract, employees at NTQUK requested a dispute resolution with the SFA in March, which Mr Bate claims "was a farce", because it was conducted by the same investigators which had visited the provider in February.

However, Mr Marsh's letter to NTQUK refutes the allegations.

"I made sure that I chaired meeting effectively and gave you the opportunity to present additional information and to present your case verbally," it reads.

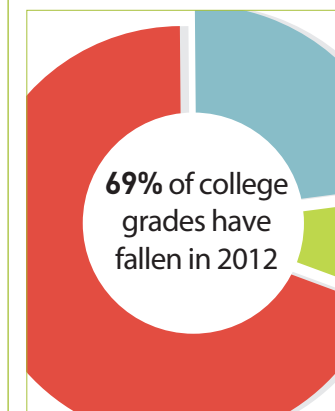
"Your presentation to the Panel did not provide any significant additional evidence to support your case and therefore did not prompt further questioning."

Mr Bate says NTQUK now wishes to enter arbitration, an alternative dispute resolution involving an independent party.

"We're not going to go under as maybe the SFA would like us to do, because we truly believe we have a very strong position," Mr Bate said.

"Now if arbitration goes against us, there's no way back. It's as simple as that."

### Grade deflation



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### NUS Conference



Victory for Toni Pearce, who is leading an FE Loans campaign

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# MPs criticise value for money at Morrisons

**Nick Summers**  
**@SummersNicholas**

Members of the Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) Select Committee have criticised the poor value for money offered by retail apprenticeships.

Ministers questioned David Way, interim chief executive of the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and Geoff Russell, chief executive of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) about the scheme delivered at Morrisons during an evidence session held at the House of Commons last week.

Katy Clark, MP for North Ayrshire and Arran, said: "We have taken evidence from Morrisons, one of the major providers of apprenticeships in this country, and they stated on the record that they would have carried out this training anyway, the only issue was the issue of certification of their employees.

"For which the UK taxpayer spent £40 million in the last tax year; do you consider that to be value for money?"

Mr Russell said the apprenticeship programme at Morrisons did offer good value for money because it offered employees better training and the "kitemark" of a nationally

recognised qualification.

"The bit we paid for - and we pay far less for that sort of service than we did for the full training of a young apprentice coming in for the first time - represents an important part of upskilling the existing workforce, which is the single biggest strategic skills weakness the UK has," Mr Russell said.

Adrian Bailey MP, chairman of the Committee, said: "It would seem that a lot of money is being spent in an area where at best, the benefits, the overall economic benefits are not obvious."

Geoff Russell said: "That is a legitimate challenge, but I think we're clear that there is value.

"It is important to recognise that this is a programme led by employers, it's a market, and we could if we wished say we will not fund retail apprentices."

Mr Bailey said while he agreed that the apprenticeship programme was led by employers, it was "funded by the taxpayer" and still needed to represent good value for money.

The NAS interim chief executive replied: "A clear influence on the return for the investment made in public money depends on the individual employer and the way in which the apprentice is then either stretched and supported

- otherwise the attitude is you've done your apprenticeship and it's business as usual.

"So with an employer like Morrisons, which takes its training development so seriously, you would expect to get a better return than what you would in some other employers, who put people through a retail apprenticeship but don't extract the full value by giving that apprentice post training the opportunity to develop and grow and get further training."

Adrian Bailey MP, chairman of the Committee, said he was "astonished" by the £23.8 million awarded to Elmfield Training in 2010/11 to deliver apprenticeships at Morrisons "before it had even been assessed by Ofsted."

"What sort of judgement or criteria did you make this decision?" Mr Bailey asked the SFA chief executive.

"We award monies to companies that have demonstrated that they can deliver successfully," Mr Russell said.

"That's how the system works."

Mr Bailey later asked Mr Russell why the SFA had awarded Elmfield the extra money without "any assessment or evidence to demonstrate that this was value for money".

"Well we don't do a value for money assessment as part of our day to day business awarding money," Mr Russell said.

# Sandwich artist questions tabled by MP

**Nick Reinis**  
**@fenickr**

Questions have been raised over apprenticeships offered by a fast-food chain.

Dudley MP Ian Austin is demanding answers after it emerged that Subway are offering £2.60 per hour for a role as a 'sandwich artist' in the Black Country.

Mr Austin said the apprenticeship was advertised by Job Centre Plus and an identical job in Dudley was advertised earlier this month.

He has asked the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) to investigate.

Although the MP has put questions to government over the issue, apprenticeships at Subway were first put in the spotlight by **FE Week** last month.

Mr Austin said: "I want to see every youngster in full-time education or proper training and I want to see more apprenticeships.

"Schemes must give apprentices the skills and experience they need to advance their careers and they have to have proper training. They call it an apprenticeship but there doesn't seem to be much training and it says it's permanent.

"I've asked the National Apprenticeship Service to look into the apprenticeships Subway are offering to see if they are genuine apprenticeships or simply a means to pay young staff below the minimum wage."

In response, a spokesperson for Subway said they offer "a comprehensive training programme for all its team members".

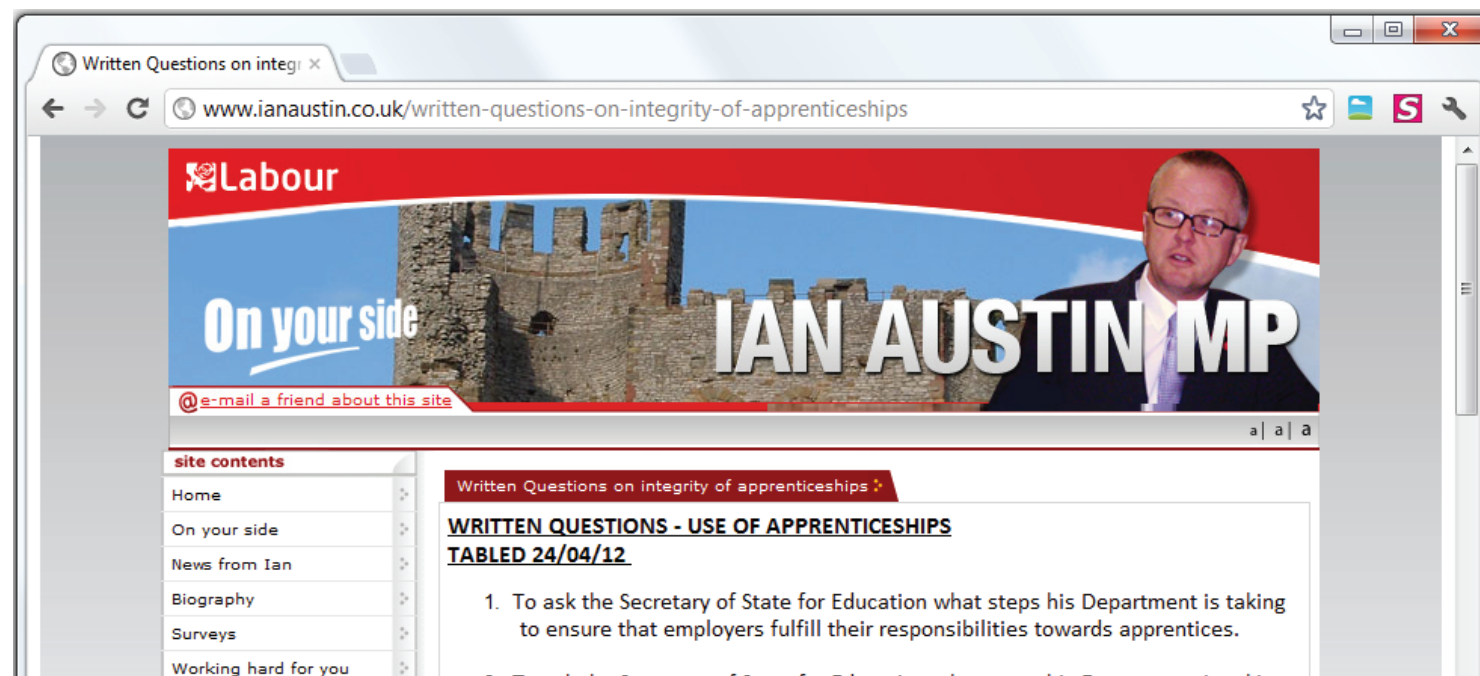
The spokesperson added: "Each franchisee candidate is required to complete formal

training and sandwich artists are trained on customer service excellence, food quality and health and safety procedures.

"Although Subway stores do not operate a nationally accredited apprenticeship scheme, individual stores or franchises may pursue their own scheme in their local area."

When asked by **FE Week** whether they would be conducting an investigation into Subway, a NAS spokesperson said they could not comment due to purdah.

However, the spokesperson added: "The NAS is clear that all apprenticeships should offer employment, significant new learning and a nationally recognised qualification, and represent value for money in public spending. The Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England and actions to drive up quality will ensure every Apprenticeship meets rigorous standards."



Ian Austin's website lists the written questions to Parliament - [www.ianaustin.co.uk](http://www.ianaustin.co.uk)



# Ofsted grades continue to fall for 157 Group colleges

**Nick Reinis**

@fenickr

Further education colleges should be judged on all aspects of their work and not just those in an Ofsted inspection, according to a membership body.

The 157 Group, which represents 27 large and successful colleges, believes contribution to the social and economic community served by a college should also be measured, as well as those by the education regulator.

It comes in the wake of analysis by *FE Week* of the Ofsted inspections of the colleges within the 157 Group over the last two years.

Since the start of 2010, five of the 10 body's colleges which have been inspected have dropped by one grade or more. The grades for three colleges have stayed the same, while one - Highbury College Portsmouth - has increased.

The final 157 Group member inspected in the last two years, The Manchester College, had never previously been inspected.

Lynne Sedgmore, chief executive, said: "The 157 Group are proud of all of our colleges and the powerful contributions they make to our society and economy.

"While Ofsted can provide an important snapshot assessment of that part of an institution's work it inspects, we are clear that any inspection results - be it Ofsted, QAA or other - whilst important, are only a partial reflection and cannot fully demonstrate the full range of high-quality activities undertaken by a large urban college.

"Nor can they offer a fully rounded criteria for truly successful, large and diverse colleges."

She added: "The 157 Group is actively supporting national policy development and working with partners to raise the quality of teaching and learning and inspection processes.

"We are developing improved ways, beyond Ofsted's current understanding, to measure a college's broader contribution to the social and economic communities it serves, reflecting the increasing emphasis placed by government on accountability to users."

The chief executive also backed Lewisham College for their "outstanding provision not inspected by Ofsted" after an inspection, published this month, which graded them as 'satisfactory'. When last inspected, the college was graded 'outstanding'.

Maxine Room, principal at Lewisham College, blamed the college's retention of students as a key issue, but insists the college is still successful.

She said: "Of course we were disappointed when we feel we have very good work going on and the achievements of our learners are very good.

"We are a successful college. Our achievement is 80 to 100 per cent so it's the retention issues particularly. We are working hard on that.

"Sometimes the difference between 80 and 85 is just one of two students in terms of retention, so it's around the margins."

She also added: "We are still a successful college working well with our learners. We are no worse than in the inspection in 2009, but the criteria has changed and the measurement

has changed and Ofsted has changed."

The college also said while the assessment "compares extremely favourably within the sector", they recognise they have "areas where improvement is needed" and the "drive for excellence continues relentlessly" for learners and the community.

The report shows that although the college's outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management were all 'satisfactory', their grades for safeguarding and equality and diversity were both judged 'good'.

In a statement, the college added: "We are committed to a culture of entrepreneurialism and our first group of young entrepreneurs has just taken part in stage one of our joint entrepreneur programme with the London Borough of Lewisham.

"Our plans for merger with Southwark College are progressing, making this one of the most exciting periods in our history despite being in challenging times."

For a round-up of college inspections since the introduction of the Common Inspection Framework in September, see pages 8 and 9.

## New AoC president-elect is Leicester College principal

**Nick Reinis**

@fenickr

The Association of Colleges (AoC) has announced that Maggie Galliers CBE, the principal of Leicester College, is their new president-elect.

She will succeed current AoC president Fiona McMillan on August 1.

Maggie said: "Colleges are the backbone of the education sector and offer programmes of a breadth and depth which is second to none. I see the AoC as crucial in helping colleges navigate the opportunities and challenges facing the sector and, to that end, I'm a member of the AoC's Reputation and Urban Colleges groups.

"It will be an honour to serve as AoC president, a role to which I will bring all my energy, commitment and passion for celebrating and advancing further education."

Maggie Galliers, who will be AoC's fifth president, has been at the helm of Leicester College since July 2002.

Before that Maggie was principal of Henley College Coventry for five years, having previously held a wide variety of management positions in further education and having taught in all education sectors: primary, secondary, further and higher.

She is currently a member of the Ofqual Board, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) Board and the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) Teaching Quality and Student Experience Committee.

In the past, she has also been a member of the Apprenticeship Task Force, the FEFC Quality Assessment Committee, the Quality Improvement Agency Board, the National Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and the LSC's Young People's Learning Committee.



She was appointed a CBE for services to local and national further education in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2009.

AoC's chair, John Bingham, said: "It's very gratifying, and testament to the value our members place on the presidency, that Maggie Galliers has decided to put herself forward for the position. I'm certain that her calibre and the high regard in which she is held by those in the sector, together with her demonstrable, unbounded enthusiasm and commitment to FE, will only benefit our members and the students they serve over the forthcoming year."

Martin Doel, AoC chief executive, added: "All at AoC look forward to working with Maggie as President. Having worked with her in many fora, and knowing of her outstanding achievements at Leicester College, I am certain she will bring great wisdom and energy."

Current AoC President, Fiona McMillan, said: "I'm delighted that Maggie will be my successor. I know that she is as passionate about the sector as I am and that she will be an excellent ambassador for colleges. She has a great deal of experience to bring to the role. I look forward to working with her in the run-up to handing over in July."

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*FE Week investigates*

# College redundancies and restructures

**Nick Reinis**

@fenickr

As the economic downturn continues to put pressure on the sector, staff at FE colleges up and down the country are increasingly facing the prospect of redundancy.

In the last few weeks, a wave of institutions have revealed plans for potential redundancies in a bid to cut costs following the loss of government income; some colleges have been hit by up to 12 per cent.

But as figures revealed last week show the country slipping into a “double-dip” recession, the threat, according to the University and College Union (UCU), is showing little sign of letting go any time soon.

Barry Lovejoy, national head of further education at the UCU, said that around 50 colleges are undergoing consultations on possible job cuts, affecting potentially 500 jobs, as well as changes in work conditions.

Some changes, he says, include “how far a teacher can progress” and their pay scales being reduced to slash wage bills.

He also added: “I would anticipate that over the next couple of weeks that it will increase to other colleges.”

However, Mr Lovejoy is “unsurprised” by the news. He said: “Colleges didn’t get their final allocations until the Easter period which shows up where they are in cash terms.

“The big picture, as I understand it, is that there’s around a seven to 12 per cent cut in terms of loss of income to colleges.

“It does vary. The amount will vary on a college’s historical position and on where its main focus of work is, adult or under 19, and there’ll be different combinations of that.

“Plus, another impact is the removal of the education maintenance allowance as that has had an impact on student numbers, which has a knock on effect on whether they can get the numbers they required.”

Just days before the start of the Easter break, Sunderland College announced it intends to make 36 people redundant as part of a bid to save £2.26 million in 2012/13.

The cuts have also led the college to review job descriptions for all teaching staff with a proposal to put in place a number of pay bands, with a formal consultation already underway.

Angela O’Donoghue, principal of Sunderland College, said: “Due to government funding cuts, we have been required to undertake a review of our staff job descriptions and department structures to ensure that we can continue to deliver excellent education for our students.

“This extensive work has concluded the need to change both. Regrettably the impact of these cuts has meant the changes we need to implement will lead to 36 redundancies.”

However, they insist that the level of service to students and customers will not change.

The principal added: “The college’s vision has always remained the same despite the tough times in which we operate.”

Although no job cuts or redundancies have been announced at Gateshead College, plans have been shared with teaching staff to “transform the way they deliver the curriculum, to

improve students’ experience and ultimately their job prospects”.

However, the move has led to industrial action by UCU members, who staged a demonstration two weeks ago outside the college, after claiming the college intends to cut teachers’ pay and increase working hours.

Richard Thorold, principal and chief executive of Gateshead College said: “The proposal involves the introduction of a new staffing structure for the teaching workforce.

“It does not involve any compulsory redundancies and there will be job opportunities for everyone affected.

“If we are to address the issues of youth unemployment and help stimulate the growth of our regional economy, we need to ensure that people leave our college with qualifications but also with a unique set of skills that make them highly employable, effective in the workplace, or in creating their own start-up businesses.

“Developing and implementing new and innovative curriculum models and skills sets is vital if we are to achieve this.”

Peterborough Regional College has begun a consultation over plans to introduce management and organisational changes in the area of Curriculum and Quality.

The plan could affect around 60 staff in management, support and administrative posts at the college.

A college spokeswoman said: “Many staff will simply transfer into very similar roles in our new structure; a number will need to apply for the new jobs we are creating that replace a

**“The big picture, as I understand it, is that there’s around a seven to 12 per cent cut in terms of loss of income to colleges”**

larger number of existing roles.

“As we consult staff we hope to ensure the numbers of jobs lost overall will be small and we will seek to make changes through voluntary methods where possible.”

Budget savings from the plans could equate to approximately £240,000, with some of the savings being “reinvested into teaching hours”.

More significant, say the college, will be improvements to the service they provide as a result of the changes.

Angela Joyce, principal and chief executive at the college, said: “We would not be making these changes unless we thought them to be essential.

“The changes will ensure we can meet the enormous challenges faced by all FE colleges and continue to meet the needs of our students and employers in the years to come.”

Meanwhile, at the start of April, it was revealed by Chesterfield College that they “estimate 80 redundancies” across the institution.

Acting principal Trevor Clay said: “Chesterfield College has to act now in order to future



Staff from Gateshead College protest over pay cuts and increased working hours.

proof the great service we provide to thousands of learners, employers and communities each year by bringing our costs in line with the funding we receive and the income we can generate.”

He added: “Our excellent track record of recruiting and delivering high quality education and training has, until now, enabled us to avoid the need for regular restructuring that many other colleges undertake.

“Currently 70 per cent of our expenditure is made up of staff costs and whilst every effort will be made to reduce non staff costs and wherever possible grow income it is, we regret, inevitable that posts at the College will be lost.

“Our estimate is that 80 redundancies, spread across all areas of the college, are required and it is hoped to reach this figure by staff electing for voluntary redundancy.”

The news from the college has been met with dismay by the UCU, who are balloting their members over the plans.

However, a consultation on similar proposals made by the College of West Anglia (CWA), which could result in net job losses of up to 19 staff, is due to close next week.

The college needs to make efficiency savings of £1.6m in 2012-13 to address reduced government funding and enable it to fund major building projects in King’s Lynn and Wisbech.

The proposals announced are designed to make savings of £400,000 in staffing costs and £1.2m in non-pay costs. The college employs around 800 staff and the posts which could be lost mainly affect non-teaching staff based in King’s Lynn.

The proposals include the closure of residential accommodation for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities at Plaxtole House in King’s Lynn and the closure of the Pulse8 fitness centre.

Principal David Pomfret said: “We are in the middle of a well-publicised period of public

sector funding cuts which is affecting colleges across the country.

“CWA is also undertaking major redevelopment with new technology centres in King’s Lynn and Wisbech and a major refurbishment of the nine-storey tower block in King’s Lynn. We need to make budget savings of £1.6m in the coming year and, although we are planning to deliver the major part through reductions in non-pay budgets, we also need to take tough decisions which inevitably affect jobs.”

Elsewhere, Stockton Riverside College is facing a £1.3 million cut in government funding for the next academic year.

A consultation is underway which could see 25 posts affected by measures including voluntary redundancy.

Dr Sujinder Sangha OBE, the college’s principal, said: “This is compounded by a rise in National Insurance and pension costs, which means we expect to have £1.5m less to spend next year. Colleges across the UK and locally are facing a similar situation.

“As a direct result of this, we expect around 25 teaching and support posts to be affected. This does not equate to 25 people losing their jobs. We have met with staff as soon as we were aware of the scale of the cuts, so they were as prepared as possible. Some have expressed an interest in voluntary redundancy, reduced hours or job share options.”

He added: “Our main focus at the moment is on supporting staff and also seeking ways of minimising the impact of these cuts on students, so their studies will not be affected.”

Karen Sutcliffe, the college’s UCU branch chair, said: “We are disappointed that government funding cuts are resulting in more job losses at the college.

“We are having regular meetings with senior management to minimise the effect on staff as far as possible.”



## FE Week profile

## Gemma Knott ~ her story

Janet Murray

@jan\_murray

The policy & communications officer of the 157 Group talks to *FE Week*

“The worst thing that could happen to me is for someone to say that I didn’t try hard enough,” says Gemma Knott, the 157 Group’s policy and communications officer.

A self-confessed “geek,” she loved reading and writing from an early age and excelled academically. But there were few role models on Northfields estate in Leicester where she grew up.

“There were low aspirations, a lot of people living on benefits and struggling with money, and once you’re on an estate like that, it can become a vicious cycle; you don’t broaden your horizons and it gets harder to escape.”

“I have to pinch myself sometimes with the people I get to talk to”

While her own ambition, and her parents’ support, undoubtedly had a role to play in her educational success, Knott says she also benefited from the Aim Higher scheme, an initiative developed under the last Labour government, which aimed to encourage young people from deprived areas to consider higher education.

This gave her the opportunity to go to open days and summer schools at various universities - including Oxford, where she was later selected for interview. Although she learned a lot from the process, it was a “very daunting experience,” she says.

“I am an ambitious person, but I still felt like I stuck out like a sore thumb at the interviews.

“Talking to the other applicants - and this might sound judgmental - they did sound like they were born with silver spoons in their mouths; they weren’t just comparing grades, they were comparing 100 per cent scores. There was a very competitive edge to everything.”

While her Oxford application was unsuccessful, Knott was offered a place to study history at Warwick University. And while her parents - a forklift truck operator and an administrative clerk - were supportive of her aspirations, they did worry about her getting into debt.

“No one in my family had ever been to university - not many of them even own their own houses - and in that kind of culture there is a fear factor about owing money,”

she says.

Among the first cohort of students to see tuition fees rise from £1,000-a-year to more than £3,000-a-year, Knott says she can empathise with prospective students (who, from September, will have to pay up to £9,000-a-year) who are fearful of debt. “When you’re from that kind of background, you don’t want to spend any more than you earn.”

Determined not to be a financial burden on her parents, from the age of 16, Knott held down numerous part-time jobs, including several stints as a tour guide at Buckingham Palace. In the final year of her degree, she got up at five in the morning to do a cleaning job at the university.

“I think my housemates thought I was crazy, when they heard the front door closing at 5am,” she recalls. “I got the 2:1 I wanted but, when I look back, I wonder how I did it.”

While she admits she “could have slowed down a bit”, juggling education and part-time work stood her in good stead when it came to finding her first job, she says.

“I made so many friends, I networked and I earned my money and learned the value of a hard day’s work. When I worked in a call centre, I learned how to listen and all those other soft skills employers really want... it’s amazing how many people are clever and have qualifications that don’t have that.”

After graduation, Knott had set her sights on a career in law, but a short-term temping job - covering for the PA to the principal of Warwickshire College - changed everything.

“It was never my choice to go into the education world but once I started work at Warwickshire College, I loved it,” she says. “I saw how hard-working and how innovative FE staff are, and I loved the buzz and the atmosphere at the college and how forward-thinking it was.”

“I’m always looking for the next strategic challenge in FE and I have got so many ideas whirring around in my head”

Landing her current job at the 157 Group - less than a year after graduating - is the best thing that has ever happened to her, she says.

While there is no “typical week,” her job can involve anything from writing press releases and policy briefings to having tea at Number 10.

“I have to pinch myself sometimes with the people I get to talk to, but at the same time I have to keep myself grounded because I have to bear in mind it is all about the learners,” she says.

“You can’t get carried away, having tea and wining and dining in the House of Lords,



Picture by Nick Linford

because you have to remember you are there primarily for the learners and the agenda of the membership.”

Knott admits she is her “own worst enemy” when it comes to workload and is so full of ideas, she sometimes ends up working around the clock to get things done.

“I have so many ideas and I guess I have an advantage with my age and not being out of university that long, which means I can empathise with learners and what their problems are.

“It is a busy role, but I do make time for other things as well.”

After taking up running just a year ago, Knott recently completed the Paris Marathon, raising £800 for the Stroke Association and is already considering training again for another long-distance run in the future.

At 23, she is relaxed about her future career plans, although she would like to remain involved with the FE sector. What continues to drive her is her aspiration for all young people to have the chance to fulfil their potential, she says.

“I like the policy and communication side of things, but whatever role I do, for me it will just be a blessing to stay in the sector.

I’m always looking for the next strategic challenge in FE and I have got so many ideas whirring around in my head - as long as I am in the sector I will be really happy. I guess it all comes back to what education has done for me; I want to make sure that all learners have access to the same kinds of opportunities.”

“Whatever role I do, for me it will just be a blessing to stay in the sector”

But she “would be lying” if she said didn’t ever feel she was taken less seriously by colleagues in the sector because of her age. “I have often felt that when I walk into a room of one of these national groups ‘Hmm, she’s a bit of a whippersnapper,’ but in a way that’s my own insecurity and I think people judge you on your outcomes.

I hope that I have now gained a voice at the table and that my age is no longer a reflection of my abilities.”



## FE Week Experts

## Shaping apprenticeships the Australian Group Training way



Before we look at shaping the future, I'd firstly like to look at the past by sharing some history behind the Australian Group Training model. Group Training in the Australian landscape involves organisations legally employing apprentices across many occupational sectors and, in turn, placing them with a host employer. The Group Training Company essentially manages all the associated paperwork, payroll, taxation requirements, effectively cutting bureaucracy out of the employment of an apprentice.

Group Training evolved in the early 1980's when industry leaders in the construction and automotive sector developed industry groups to drive this unique and flexible apprenticeship employment model for their sector. The concept was largely developed in response to the needs of small businesses when these individuals found staffing difficult given the unpredictable nature of their operations and work patterns.

By 1990 there were close to 90 Group Training companies employing around 11,000 apprentices. Today in Australia, there is more than 180 Group Training Companies legally employing in excess of 50,000 apprentices, making the Group Training network the single largest employer of apprentices.

In England, this Group Training concept is known as an Apprenticeship Training Agency or ATA. The full capacity of the model is yet to be demonstrated in England having only been piloted since 2009. It must be understood that this agency model is a business that grows very organically as it seeds apprentice commencements, but should not be underestimated as for the opportunity it presents to small businesses that traditionally haven't employed an apprentice. Another major function of the agency model which should not be overlooked is the structured support to apprentice learners.

Apprentices employed through the agency

model have the ability to be placed with multiple host employers during their apprenticeship, which enhances learning experience and develops deeper applied knowledge and skills. If we explore completion rates of an agency employed apprentices in Australia, typically we find successful completion rates are quite higher than traditionally direct employed apprentices. This is due to the quality structured recruitment process that agencies and Group Training provide, particularly for the small business sector that have limited resources and are unfamiliar with recruitment procedures.

The other key element that supports successful completion rates for agency employed apprentices is the solid pastoral care framework that apprentices and host employers receive. The Apprenticeship Training Agency is effectively an impartial third party that monitors the workplace performance of the apprentice, host employer and training provider or college attached to the relationship.

Smaller businesses in England that we currently work with have embraced the employment model, seeing it as the way to assist with the procurement of an apprentice and reducing the associated burdens that are perceived with apprenticeships.

Although there are similarities between England and Australia's employment and apprenticeship systems, there are naturally many variations. The Australian apprenticeship programme is heavily subsidised by Government, providing employers and Group Training Companies with incentives; in addition to funding associated training costs. Government incentives can assist in reducing some wage associated costs, including training downtime for employers and, if applied in an ethical manner, can reward good employer behaviour.

In light of recent media coverage on quality of apprenticeships we feel confident the agency model can, and will, provide a long-term solid structured safety net to all stakeholders. If we revisit the Australian Group Training model, many organisations are required to operate with eight National Standards for Group Training Organisations, which essentially underpins the operation and are audited by Government State or Territory Training Authorities (STAs). STAs are responsible for compliance, audit evaluation, including an independent audit program to ensure compliance with the National Standards for Group Training Organisations.

We are optimistic as to the future of apprenticeship training agencies in England and strongly feel that, as the model matures, it will demonstrate success for all parties; apprentices, host employers and local communities.

Ashley Langdon, Chief Executive Officer,  
IMPACT Apprenticeships

## FE should learn 'employment truths' from welfare-to-work

The relationship between further education, the world of work, and local economic development is at a crossroads. With over one million young people unemployed for the first time, FE colleges are now in a unique position to revolutionise how they support learners' migration from training into gainful employment.

The Wolf Review suggested we shift the focus from "the accrual of qualifications" to "employment outcomes" and this is the clear direction of travel for government. New funding streams have been opened up for colleges that train jobseekers, and colleges will begin experiencing funding outcomes related to a progression into employment. Additionally, the increase in apprenticeships and other incentives in the Youth Contract to boost youth employability all point to the pivotal role colleges must play in reversing the youth unemployment trend.

As FE principals consider the new role their institutions will play in getting young Britons working, there are three "employment truths" FE can borrow from the welfare-to-work sector that will boost employability outcomes and put their college on the front foot in tackling youth unemployment.

**Qualifications matter much less than attitude**

Our research into the value of vocational skills and apprenticeships found employers and young people recognise that securing meaningful work in today's economy requires training beyond earned qualifications, namely an increased focus on employability or "soft skills".

Communication skills, organisational skills, time keeping, team work and motivation are ranked as more important than qualifications achieved by the young people and employers we interviewed. FE colleges are well placed to incorporate these softer skills into the student experience. Learners must leave FE with not only work-ready qualifications but armed with a work-ready attitude.

**Local economic growth relies on specific skill development**

When an employer plans to invest in new manufacturing or distribution facilities, there is a long-term vision, looking at the likely labour market skills to support the business not in 2012 but in 2015, 2020 and beyond. FE institutions should also take a similar long-term approach when developing and marketing their course offering.

This requires better access to labour market intelligence, something colleges can achieve through more collaboration with their Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) or Chamber of Commerce. Colleges that trade in popular, but low need vocational skills (for instance media or hairdressing courses) for less well-known, but potentially more sought after skills (like process engineering and green construction) demanded



by local entrepreneurship, will produce graduates with the training and qualifications that will help them secure sustainable employment.

**Matchmaking and networking are critical to recruitment success**

Mentors and professional role models build young people's confidence, passion and experience, all critical factors for securing work in the current jobs market. Equally, local employers, with limited resources to recruit, benefit from access to a pool of skilled, passionate young employees. Working with LEPs or Chambers of Commerce, colleges can align local business services to effectively join up an "employer offer".

Existing digitally or through traditional jobs boards and networking, colleges must increase employers' engagement with learners before the official job search begins. Learners can build employability skills through industry master classes and mentoring schemes that give them access to successful local individuals and SMEs.

Colleges needn't go it alone when it comes to placing employability at the heart of their student support. Collaborating with one another and working in partnership with organisations that have strong track records in addressing employability needs and securing job outcomes will provide FE learners with the additional career support necessary to secure a foot on the job ladder in a challenging labour market.

Whether through an outsourced or tailored model, colleges that set employment-outcomes at the heart of their operations will not only empower young people to build lasting careers, but prove their contribution to a competitive labour market ready to compete in the global economy of the 21st century.

Mike Lee, Head of Skills and Young People,  
Working Links



## FE Week Experts

# What counts as being a successful college?



The 157 Group has been debating how it moves forward six years on from its inception. The sector context in 2012 is very different from 2006, not least with the new flexibilities and freedoms, the changing style of Ofsted, fiscal reductions and a new spirit of entrepreneurialism. A key question is how a successful college is defined and measured in this changing political, educational and policy environment.

As a Group, our recent focus has been on helping shape policy and influencing development of the sector, drawing on a powerful principal peer support group, a system of eleven peer networks and the

added value of delivering focussed project activities. We believe that it is timely and important to articulate, a new, sophisticated and sector owned approach to determining what counts as a successful college in the current decade. We believe it must encompass Ofsted judgements, but go even further.

The capacity to maintain and improve the broad range of college provision and performance in changing contexts is key to any assessment of whether a college as a whole can be termed successful. The views of those who look at one aspect of a college's work in depth such as Ofsted, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and Skills Funding Agency are important, but a more holistic judgment can only be achieved through a process involving rigorous peer review.

The 157 Group, like other college groups, has initiated a peer review process among its members in a conscious attempt to ensure a sector owned/led approach to success and quality improvement that builds on but goes beyond external assessments.

The broader mission of an FE college, the various purposes it serves in a community,

its economic mission and the extent to which the college as a whole can fulfil its stated purposes, now and in the future, must be the core basis for assessing its overall success.

It is not appropriate for colleges to be measured primarily from a schools, qualification and academic centric paradigm when our mission is to deliver a broad spectrum of services beyond qualifications and contribute to the broad spectrum of community, economic and social benefit.

External judgments on inspected provision made by bodies like Ofsted and QAA will be an important component of any such assessment. So too will external judgments of a college's financial health, including auditors reports. However, since Ofsted reports are based on snapshot trends covering only a small fraction of a college's work, their main value is in helping assess how far we can have confidence in a college's own judgments.

It is good Ofsted is moving to focus consistently on determining the quality of teaching and learning, rather than reflecting more transient political agendas. In determining whether an institution is

successful, increasing attention needs to be paid to other factors.

In a user-driven system the judgments of key users, for example, as reflected in surveys of student and employer satisfaction, will become increasingly central. Success rates are one important outcome but increasingly it is recognised that so too are student destinations. In the future a college's success may need to be assessed in terms of preparing students to be entrepreneurial and enterprising - exercising initiative and innovation.

In addition, there are benefits a college needs to be able to demonstrate, such as impact on local business viability, a contribution to economic regeneration, increasing social cohesion and other aspects of engagement with the wider community. A successful college has to be both effective and inclusive. It is not sufficient to achieve high success rates by not engaging with the full range of potential clients or by being too selective.

Finally, to be truly successful, a college needs to be outward looking, working with and where necessary supporting other institutions as well as contributing to the wider process of policy formulation.

*Process of policy formulation Director, 157 Group*

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Webinars are delivered by Nick Linford, author of The hands-on guide to post-16 funding, Managing Director of Lsect & Managing Editor of FE Week



## Upcoming Webinars

Date: Thursday 3rd May 2012 : 10am

Topic: Introduction to FE Loans policy

Duration: 30mins

Cost: Free of charge

For more information and sign up: [click here](#)

Date: Tuesday 8th May 2012 :

Topic: Apprenticeship funding

Duration: Two hours

Cost: £95 + VAT

Date: Monday 14th May 2012 : 2pm

Topic: Apprenticeship funding

Duration: Two hours

Cost: £95 + VAT

For more information and sign up: [click here](#)

Date: Wednesday 16th May 2012 : 2pm

Topic: Subcontracting funding webinar

Duration: Two hours

Cost: £95 + VAT

For more information and sign up: [click here](#)

To sign up go online at:  
[lsect.co.uk/webinars](http://lsect.co.uk/webinars)

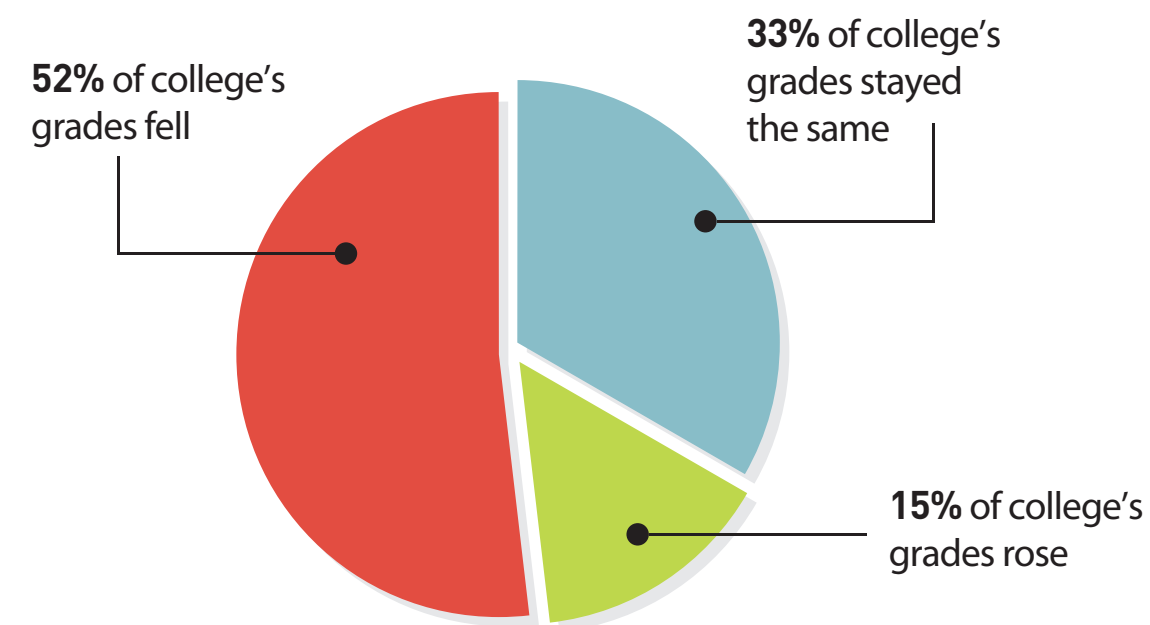
NEW DATE



# *FE Week gets technical ~ Ofsted grades*

A breakdown of all college inspection grades since the introduction of the Common Inspection Framework in September 2011.

The figures below show the majority of colleges inspected have seen the grade fall.



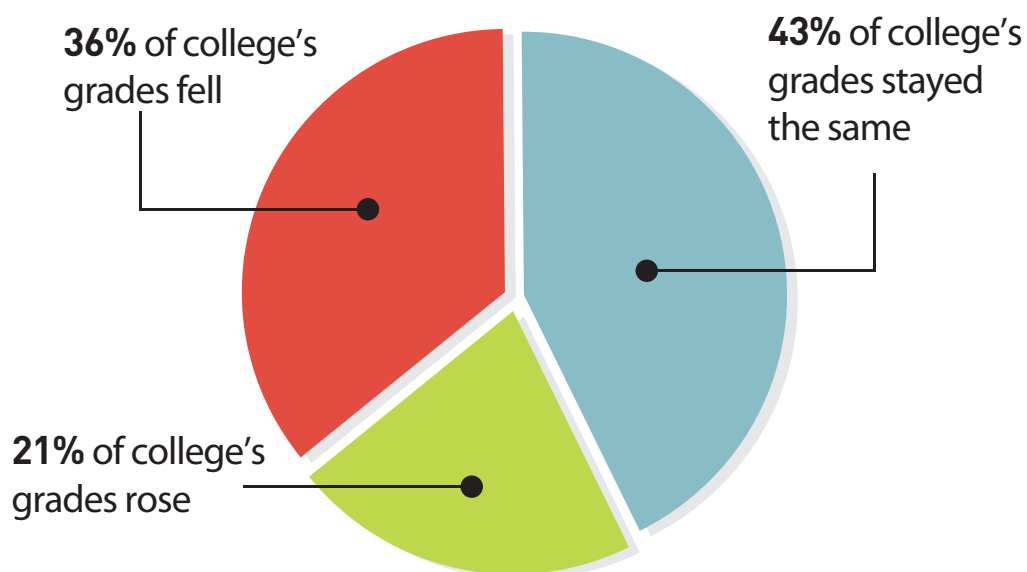
## October 2011 - February 2012

27 college inspections  
Average Ofsted rating fell by

**0.56 of a grade**



**Of which in 2011**



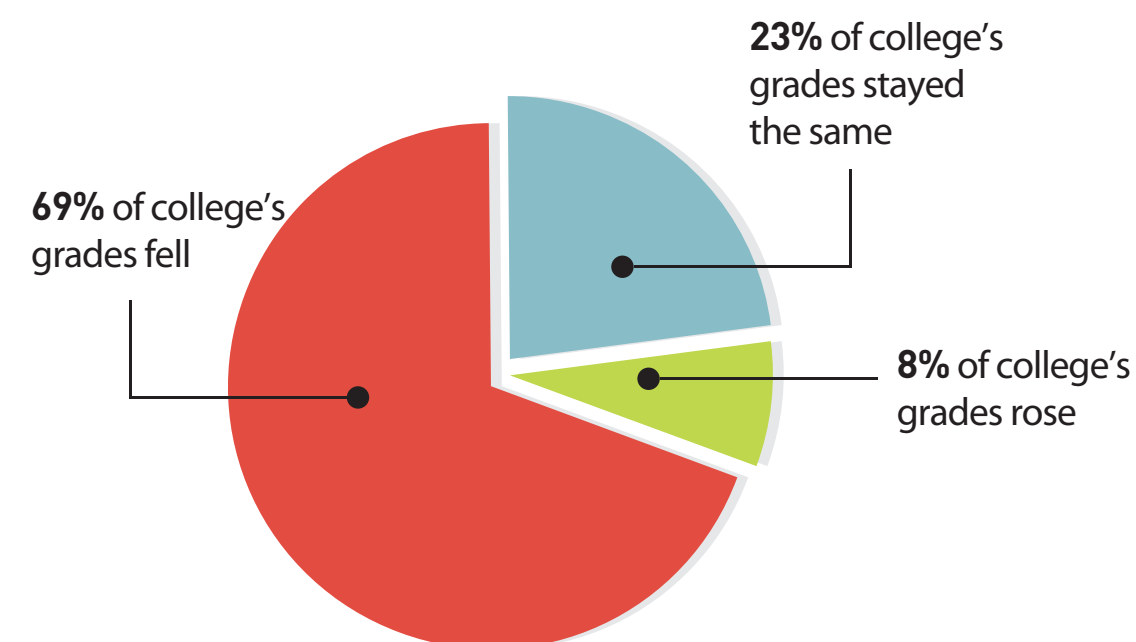
## October 2011 - December 2011

14 college inspections  
Average Ofsted ratings fell by

**0.07 of a grade**



**and 2012**



## January 2012 - March 2012

13 college inspections  
Average Ofsted ratings fell by

**1.08 of a grade**

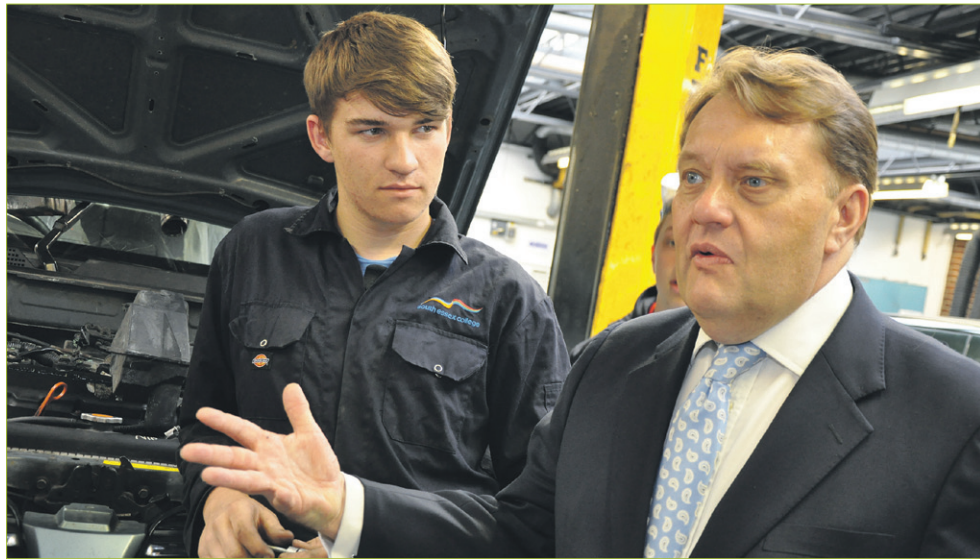


College	Inspection Grade since new CIF	Inspection date	Previous inspection grade	Previous date	Grade increase or decrease
Great Yarmouth College	3	16-Mar-12	4	12-Nov-10	1
North Warwickshire & Hinckley College	2	16-Mar-12	1	29-Oct-07	-1
Kensington & Chelsea College	3	09-Mar-12	2	26-Feb-07	-1
Stratford-upon-Avon College	3	02-Mar-12	2	05-Mar-07	-1
Lewisham College	3	02-Mar-12	1	24-Apr-06	-2
City of Wolverhampton College	4	20-Feb-12	2	10-Dec-07	-2
Lambeth College	4	20-Feb-12	2	25-Feb-08	-2
Macclesfield College	4	20-Feb-12	1	25-Sep-06	-3
Knowsley Community College	4	06-Feb-12	2	25-Feb-08	-2
Brooklands College	3	06-Feb-12	3	05-Oct-09	0
Canterbury College	3	30-Jan-12	3	01-Oct-07	0
South Essex College of Further and Higher Education	3	30-Jan-12	2	12-May-08	-1
Wiltshire College	3	16-Jan-12	3	08-Oct-07	0
Peterborough Regional College	2	12-Dec-11	3	14-Apr-08	1
Southwark College	4	05-Dec-11	3	15-Mar-10	-1
K-College	3	05-Dec-11	2	27-Feb-06	-1
Askham Bryan College	2	05-Dec-11	3	01-Oct-07	1
Burton and South Derbyshire College	2	05-Dec-11	2	26-Nov-07	0
Henshaws College	2	22-Nov-11	2	21-Mar-06	0
Sussex Coast College Hastings	4	21-Nov-11	3	12-May-08	-1
Stephenson College	3	21-Nov-11	2	04-Dec-06	-1
Bishop Auckland College	2	21-Nov-11	2	26-Nov-07	0
Plumpton College	2	21-Nov-11	2	04-Jun-07	0
Kidderminster	3	14-Nov-11	2	30-Mar-09	-1
Farnborough College of Technology	1	14-Nov-11	3	26-Nov-07	2
Central Bedfordshire College (Formerly Dunstable College)	3	07-Nov-11	3	28-Apr-08	0
Shrewsbury College	3	31-Oct-11	3	28-Jan-08	0



# FE Week campus round-up

## John Hayes on hand to unveil South Essex College's £102 million plans for the future



A college's plans for the future were unveiled during a visit by John Hayes, the minister of state for FE, skills and lifelong learning.

The Basildon Campus of South Essex College hosted Mr Hayes, along with local MPs, to listen to a briefing on the three new builds the college is planning to embark upon.

The projects see a new circa £30 million campus in Basildon in 2015, a £45 million campus in Thurrock in 2014, and a campus in Southend, where work has already started on a new £27 million state-of-the-art library

and learning facility for 2013. He also met students studying various motor vehicle based qualifications, including apprentices in light vehicle maintenance and repair and IMI Level 2 motor vehicle maintenance and repair of light vehicles.

Acting principal John Hayles said: "The Minister was impressed about the progress we are making in raising aspirations and results across the region.

"He was also great advocate that positive buildings make for a great place for learning, which is very much our vision."



## Newham College builds meditation garden

Teenagers' fundraising efforts for a children's hospice were celebrated in a newly-created garden of meditation.

Richard House Children's Hospice staff dedicated a special brick in their garden's a 'path of life' for the £550 raised by 14 teenagers brought together by Newham College.

The hospice transformed a derelict part of its grounds into a garden to give family members and friends space to treasure precious moments with children with life-threatening health conditions.

Hospice life president Anthea Hare said: "The path of life creates a positive experience for family members and friends of the children who

stay here and represents so many individuals and organisations that have helped us to expand our work.

"The children enjoy being here and we give them support to do things that they wouldn't be able to do in their own homes."

College staff member, Liana Mathurin-Brown, last summer organised activities for the teenagers for the 'Summer of Lifetime' programme. The programme was supported by the Dame Kelly Holmes Legacy Trust, vinspired, Newham Council, and the government. Greenfingers Charity designed and built the path with financial assistance from Grange Farm Centre that totalled around £20,000.



## Gary Lineker gets behind Salford City College

Students from the Salford City College Sports Academy were recently invited to Old Trafford to meet England football hero Gary Lineker.

The BBC Match of the Day host was guest speaker at the Greater Manchester launch of Drive IQ - a programme to educate young people before they get behind the wheel, made up of 'brain training modules' that are often missed in traditional teaching methods.

Lineker said: "As a father with sons making their way out on the road, I want to be sure they're as prepared as they can be, Drive IQ is a

great starting point."

Salford City College students were invited to participate in taster workshops which used the Drive IQ software. Student Jessica Martins said: "I think it's a great idea to give young people more support before they begin driving; if it helps reduce the risk of accidents, it's worth doing the programme."

Sports development manager Phil Arbelo-Dolan said: "The students had a great time learning about the Drive IQ programme and were thrilled to meet one of their sporting heroes."

## Walsall College student brushes off the competition



Walsall College student Lucy Porter has been named winner of the Midlands heat in Dulux Decorator Centre's Apprentice of the Year competition.

The budding painter and decorator fought off stiff competition from 14 other apprentices in the heat, which was held at Bournville College on March 28.

Lucy (20) successfully completed a practical work piece, which included elements of wallpapering, stencilling, waterborne glosses and special effects all within a set time.

Lucy, who is currently completing her apprenticeship at Walsall College, said: "I am over the moon to have finished first.

"The competition was a real challenge for us all, but one that I enjoyed immensely. I'm sure the final will be just as demanding, I can't wait!"

The finals are taking place at Accrington and Rossendale College in June.



## Student at Weston College is video star

Weston College's youngest professionally qualified student film editor has used his creative skills in a cutting edge music video for a rising local singing star.

Corry Raymond (18), who qualified in 'Final Cut Pro' three years ago, has worked alongside singer Ryan Inglis - a former Weston College student - on a video for his latest single, Feel Any Feeling. The BTEC media production course student, of Shrubbery Terrace, said: "It's taken two months to put together using state-of-the-art studios at College and I've had brilliant help from almost all departments at University Campus.

Ryan (30), of Weston, recorded songs for his album at the world famous Abbey Road studios in London, where the Beatles recorded many of their albums.

College music course co-ordinator, Wendy Chadwick, added: "Corry's doing this as part of his course work and his editing skills are amazingly sophisticated. We are also fortunate to have fantastic technology here."



## Havering College students show fashion flair



The next generation of up-and-coming designers from Havering College of Further and Higher Education showcased their creations at a major catwalk event.

Five final year BA Fashion degree students from the college in Hornchurch, Essex, took their cutting edge collections to London's Alternative Fashion Week.

Press photographers from across the globe descended on the six day event at Spitalfields Traders Market in East London.

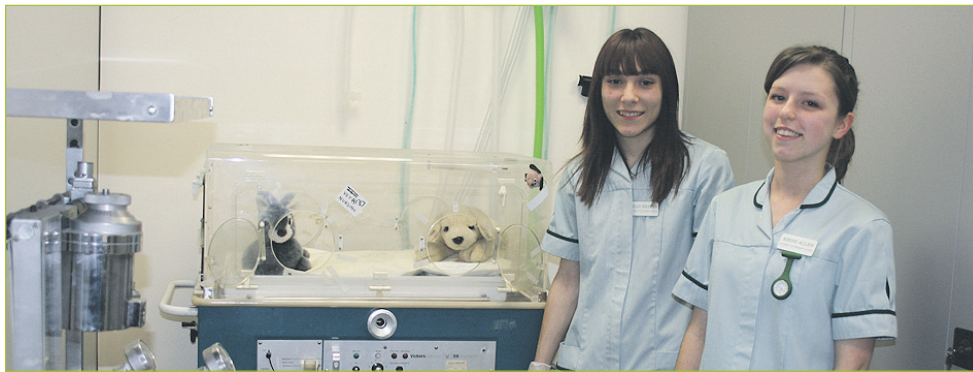
The bi-annual show is regarded by the fashion industry as a hotbed for raw,

undiscovered designer talent.

Havering College was chosen from hundreds of applications for one of 85 catwalk show slots.

Head of fashion Marie Loney said: "Alternative Fashion Week is a truly international event and we are very proud our BA Fashion degree students were given the opportunity to be a part of it.

"It gave the students a real buzz to see the fantastic reaction from the sea of photographers when the models stepped onto the catwalk wearing their designs."



## Canterbury College's new virtual vet clinic

Canterbury College's impressive new Veterinary Nursing laboratory has been nominated for a top design award.

The state-of-the-art lab is in the running to win an S-Lab award for laboratory design.

The awarding body was impressed by its top-range facilities that include a mock surgical theatre, X-Ray machinery and an incubator.

The design allows Veterinary Nursing and Animal Management students to experience

conditions of working in a practicing veterinary lab.

Alan Carver, the college's capital projects manager, said: "We're proud to be shortlisted for the award because it recognises the hard work that went into making this a first-class teaching facility. We worked closely with our Veterinary Nursing and Animal Care staff who all have industry experience, throughout the design process.

## Success for Cambridge Regional College's 100 apprentices in 100 days campaign



Employers have backed an apprenticeship campaign by Cambridge Regional College to encourage businesses to provide more jobs for young people.

The 100 apprentices in 100 days campaign was launched by city MP Julian Huppert with a

promise to take on the first apprentice.

And employers have already stepped forward to offer new apprenticeship opportunities for young people, across a range of industries.

Laraine Moody, CRC Assistant Principal for Employment and Skills, said the campaign – due to run until the end of June – had already encouraged more than 40 employers to step forward with openings for young people.

"The response has been hugely encouraging and we hope it will continue at this level until the end of the campaign," she said.

Dr Huppert, who is looking for an apprentice to work in his constituency office, said: "The apprenticeship scheme is an excellent way for young people to learn valuable skills in a working environment.



## South Thames College's Olympic helpers

Six excited students from South Thames College have been chosen to be ball boys and girls at this summer's Olympic Games.

The Tennis events are being held at the Wimbledon All England Lawn Tennis Club. The students, aged sixteen to eighteen, took part in the tennis trials which were run as part of London Organisation Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games' (LOCOG's) Young Games Maker Programme.

The search for volunteers was held in November 2011 and was hosted in South Thames College's brand new Sports England

Standard Sports Hall.

The students beat off competition from hundreds of school children across Wandsworth and Merton and will now join an intensive training programme.

College principal Sue Rimmer OBE said: "South Thames College embeds the Olympic and Paralympic values into everyday life within the College and we have a wealth of talented and exceptional students that are out in the local community doing positive things.

"South Thames is proud to be a part of the Olympic legacy."

## Barking & Dagenham College volunteers



A group of green fingered volunteers from Barking & Dagenham College have been giving up their time to help regenerate Mayesbrook Park.

The team of nine, who are Legacy Champions at the college, volunteer every Thursday at the park, planting trees, cleaning and generally helping make the park an even nicer place to visit.

The team have been working at the park

for four weeks and will finish the project at the end of April.

Nadim Mea, who works at the college and manages the Legacy Champions, said: "The team is doing such a great job and have already planted over 150 trees. I think they set a great example to other young people and members of the community, showing that giving up a bit of your free time for a good cause can really make a difference."

## City College Southampton turns up the heat at cookery competition to win 31 awards



Budding chefs at City College Southampton returned triumphant from a recent cookery competition having picked up 31 awards.

The students, who are all studying catering and hospitality, walked away from the Wessex Salon Culinaire competition with a total of 16 gold medals, six silver, five bronze and four certificates of merit.

The adrenaline-fueled event saw a feast of activity from over 450 young chefs competing against one another in Brockenhurst.

David Hancock, catering and hospitality lecturer at City College, said: "This event provides a fantastic platform for the students to demonstrate all their hard work and commitment whilst experiencing the thrill of performing under pressure. I'm immensely proud of their achievements."



## FE Week events...

# NUS celebrates 90 years at annual conference

**Shane Mann**

@Shanermann

Over 1,500 students from across educational institutions in the UK descended upon Sheffield's City Hall to attend the National Union of Students (NUS) flagship National Conference.

National conference is the sovereign body of the NUS and sees delegates electing their representatives and policy for the forthcoming academic year. A raft of policy was debated and approved by delegates regarding the Union's political stance on various aspects of further education (FE).

Celebrating 90 years since its formation, the NUS, has often been criticised for its prioritisation of more higher education related campaigns. However in recent years efforts have been made by many to raise the profile of FE within the NUS and to more ferociously campaign on the issues that the FE membership mandate the Union with.

On day two of the conference Toni Pearce was re-elected in a landslide victory to the office of vice president further education for the NUS.

Pearce, formally President of Cornwall College Students' Union, was elected in the first round of voting, securing 127 of 199 votes. Her opponent Jamil Keating received 69 votes and "re-open nominations" three.

Speaking during the election's hustings on the second day of conference, Pearce said: "NUS must move forward with our narrative of a fair, high quality tertiary education system for all, based on parity of esteem

between academic and vocational, supported by genuinely independent information advice and guidance and properly funded by the state."

Following on from the ballot of FE delegates and her re-election in Sheffield, Pearce explained to *FE Week* the mandate that she has been given by her membership for the forthcoming year.

**"We are witnessing an entire generation of young people not just being forgotten by their government, but being completely abandoned"**

"I am overwhelmed that the FE membership has given me the opportunity to once again represent FE students. My first term has thrown at me many challenges and our movement begun the fight to protect our sector and students. From the harsh withdrawal of EMA to the proposed removal of the Care to Learn grant. We have only seen what two years of this Coalition Government has done to the sector, we have another three."

Pearce went on to declare that her second

term will be one where she leads the Union's refocus to those who are the most vulnerable.

"We are witnessing an entire generation of young people not just being forgotten by their government, but being completely abandoned. Successive governments have attempted to pull the rug from under young people, and maybe they've almost been successful. But I absolutely refuse to sit back and accept it. Last year we were successful in our campaign to prevent the withdrawal of Care to Learn and I am determined that we are mobilise our Unions once more to protect those that are most vulnerable."

During the conference the 1,500 delegates mandated the Union with plethora of new policies that it must act upon during the forthcoming academic year. The further education zone committee proposed several policies which sanctioned stances on Ofsted, Student Governors, Offender Learning and called for the implementation of independent complaints and appeals procedure outside of internal institutional structures; similar to the OIA in Higher Education.

Delegates also debated the Union's approach to the government's White Paper on higher education reforms leading to a vote calling for the resignation of David Willets, the universities and science minister. The conference delegates also voted to hold a national demonstration against the government's reforms in the first term of the 2012-13 academic year; a demonstration that is expected to involve thousands of FE students; in opposition to government cuts in education.



Toni Pearce was reelected as VP for FE







The NUS Annual Conference was held at Sheffield City Hall



Liam Burns was reelected as President of the NUS

# Keep FE Free campaign launched by NUS

Shane Mann

@Shanermann

On the first day of its National Conference on Tuesday, NUS launched its latest FE campaign – Keep FE Free; its campaign against the introduction of fees and student loans for adults in further education in England.

The campaign launch featured as part of a fringe event during the conference discussing the government's proposal of introducing a system of student loans; similar to tuition fee loans in HE. This introduction of loans is to offset the governments planned withdrawal of the current 50 per cent subsidy for level 3 qualifications for those over 24 years old.

The vice president of NUS, Toni Pearce opened the fringe by providing the room, of around 100 FE and HE students, with an introduction to the government's proposals and why NUS believes the government should "halt progress on the introduction of fees for college students."

Pearce went on to add that, "under the new regime, adults will face barriers to participation and progression, leaving them with limited education, training and employment opportunities."

Following on from her opening of the fringe and launch of the campaign; Pearce was joined on the platform by Fiona Aldridge, head of work place learning at the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE). Aldridge informed the delegates of NIACE's undertaking of

research into the impact the Government's proposals would have and declared that they "were a high risk strategy."

Aldridge explained that NIACE in principle supports the policy of learner contributions towards to the cost of their education; however warned that the impact of the current proposal is under-researched.

"We would support in principle that if you can contribute to the cost of your learning then adding private money to public money does increase the provision that can be offered. However, we do think that the demand for loans and the impact of loans is under-researched, that the policy is being implemented too quickly and there is a severe underestimate of the complexity."

Following on from the remarks of both speakers, delegates were then invited to

debate their views on the proposals and were encouraged to lobby their local MP's. Delegates discussed and shared their own experiences from their Unions. The FE Zone Committee of the NUS has produced post cards with a clear message emblazoned requesting their MP to not support these proposals.

Pearce added: "This cut in funding will be hugely damaging to further education, normally a place where adults can get a second chance if they've been failed the first time around. How will adults re-train to find work in the current economic climate? How will they access higher level apprenticeships? And how will they afford Access to HE courses? I and my membership will campaign tirelessly against the implementation of these loans."



**"The demand for loans and the impact of loans is under-researched, the policy is being implemented too quickly and there is a severe underestimate of the complexity"**

- Fiona Aldridge, Head of Work Place Learning at NIACE



# VQ Day

## 20 June 2012

An initiative by **Edge**

### Celebrating vocational achievement

If you're one of the millions who have achieved vocational success, visit [www.vqday.org.uk](http://www.vqday.org.uk) to see how you can get involved in the fifth annual VQ Day – a day to recognise the value of high quality vocational qualifications and celebrate vocational achievement.

**There are many paths to success –  
make sure yours is recognised.**

Cut along this line and keep this poster so you don't forget the date!



# You've earned it.

**VQDay**

Celebrating Vocational  
Achievement

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## Curriculum Manager: Construction & Engineering

**£45,940 per annum**

### Aspire to deliver excellence?

### Effective people management skills?

### Drive and enthusiasm to ensure innovation and change?

If you have all of these qualities and would like an opportunity to play a leading role in the continued development of our hugely successful training centres, we would like to hear from you.

The Harrow Skills Centre and Whitefriars Training Centre provide vocational training opportunities in a range of construction and associated trades, for post-16 and 14-16 learners.

As the Curriculum Manager: Construction and Engineering you will be responsible for the continuing development of both Centres, as state of the art learning environments. An experienced people manager with effective planning, organisation and financial management skills, you will lead a team to ensure the delivery of high quality and work related training for young people and adults.

To be successful in this role you will have a good knowledge of the curriculum and be able to demonstrate a successful track record in delivering vocational training and working with young people. Experience of delivery of Apprenticeships is desirable.

Should you wish to find out more about this opportunity or arrange a visit to the centres, please contact **Madeleine Martin** on **0115 911 1119**.

The assessment centre is scheduled to take place on **15th May 2012** with interviews taking place on **18th May 2012**.

We are working in partnership with College Leadership Services on this important appointment.

Please contact Helen Anderson for an application pack: [handerson@collegeleadership.co.uk](mailto:handerson@collegeleadership.co.uk) or 0115 911 1117, or visit [www.collegeleadership.co.uk/current\\_appointments.asp](http://www.collegeleadership.co.uk/current_appointments.asp) for further information about this post.

**College Leadership Services**  
Expertise in FE

The deadline for receipt of completed application forms is 12noon on Friday 4th May 2012.

# Harrow

COLLEGE



Bridging the gap between  
education and the workplace

## Qualifications Manager

Working Knowledge is an award winning social enterprise that exists to bridge the gap between education and the workplace. We run high energy events that bring students and business together in a simulation of the workplace. These events generate evidence for employability and enterprise qualifications which is where you come in!

We are looking for an additional freelance Qualifications Manager to assist in the compilation and delivery of high quality portfolios which meet the requirements of NCFE and our partner colleges.

You should be a charismatic person who can rapidly build rapport with tutors and students to ensure that our events achieve the qualification without the paperwork detrimentally impacting their experience of the event.

Ideally you are based near Bristol and available to work approximately 50 days per year.

The main duties will include:

1. Train college tutors how to assess student work at events
2. Supervise student registration at events
3. Ensure the quality of student portfolios and tutor assessment at events
4. Complete 100% first phase IV and support the college to 'mop-up' any additional work to maximise success.

The Qualifications Manager role is well established with clearly defined processes in place. This role has been created to allow us to continue to expand and help more young people prepare for work while opening the eyes of employers to young talent available locally.

To apply for the position please send a CV and covering letter to **Kate Morgan** at [kate.morgan@workingknowledge.org.uk](mailto:kate.morgan@workingknowledge.org.uk) by **4th May**.



Barking & Dagenham College

**Your route to success**  
Enterprise...Creativity...Innovation...High Standards

Our brand new purpose built Technical Skills and flagship Academy, at the heart of Barking Town Centre, will open in September 2012 and we are now looking to appoint a number of highly motivated lecturers from various disciplines.

For further information and how to apply you are invited to visit our website: [www.barkingdagenhamcollege.ac.uk](http://www.barkingdagenhamcollege.ac.uk).

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job listings  
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**NORTH WEST KENT COLLEGE**

With more than 4,000 full-time students at two main campuses in Dartford and Gravesend, North West Kent College is a progressive and forward-thinking organisation at the forefront of education. Our mission is to help our students and staff alike to achieve their full potential within a supportive and team-focused environment.

### Web Administrator - Dartford

**Full time 37 Hours p.w**  
**£30,280 - £35,104 per annum**

Right now we need a creative and self-motivated individual to oversee the day-to-day operation of our websites. As well as developing the sites to maximise their potential, you will monitor performance and configuration, maintain web servers and produce imaginative new designs that engage staff and students. This wide-ranging role will also see you examine website usage and work with our IT and MIS teams to develop solutions.

In technical terms, you should bring sound experience of Moodle and SharePoint, together with a good working knowledge of web telemetry and SEO, Visual Studio, PHP, CSS and Scripting Languages (JavaScript, HTML, ASPX), Database Connections (OLEDB, .Net, ODBC), MS Reporting Services, MySQL and MSSQL Server. Beyond that, you will need to be a strong communicator and teamworker with excellent project management and problem solving skills. A customer-focused attitude is a must too.

### Reporter/Database Administrator - Dartford

**Full time 37 Hours p.w**  
**£30,280 - £35,104 per annum**

Your challenge is to drive the development of reporting across the college, ensuring that we can make the best use of a diverse range of data sources to inform key decision making at senior level. As well as delivering regular reports, you will devise and implement new methodologies to provide a unified cross-college reporting system. We also need you to create an SQL Server Reporting Service and develop a new Data Warehouse using SQL Server Technology.

Qualified to Degree Level or equivalent, you will bring sound experience of working with reporting development software including Crystal Reports or similar, Visual Studio, PHP and Scripting Languages, Database Connections OLEDB, .Net, ODBC and MS Reporting Services. Self-motivated and customer-focused, you should also have excellent Database skills using MS SQL Server, Oracle and MySQL.

**Application forms and further information available on [www.nwkcollege.ac.uk](http://www.nwkcollege.ac.uk)**  
**CVs not accepted. No agencies please.**  
**Closing date: Wednesday 9 May 2012 at 5pm**

The college is committed to promoting equal opportunities and actively encourages applications from disabled persons and ethnic minorities.



# #FEdebate

Get involved with the further education debate on Twitter using our hashtag #FEdebate

You can use the hashtag to stimulate debate whenever you want but we'll also be holding monthly half hour #FEdebate sessions where you can discuss the topic of the day on Twitter

Make sure to include the hashtag #FEdebate in your tweet to get involved in the conversation!



The first #FEdebate will be held on 30th April at 4PM



If you've never used Twitter before then check out our handy guide at: [www.feweek.co.uk/twitterguide](http://www.feweek.co.uk/twitterguide) for all our tips and tricks on how to tweet!

## FE Week Sudoku challenge

2					5	4		9
	1			3	8	2	5	
7	6		4					
9	4			7		6		
	8		9		6		4	
		2		1			9	5
					9		8	4
	5	7	6	4			3	
3		4	2					1

Difficulty:  
**EASY**

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

Solutions: Next week

9		4			2			3
			9	3		2		
	3		1					9
1						3	5	
	6						8	
	7	8						6
8					1		6	
		5		7	4			
4		7	2			5		8

Difficulty:  
**MEDIUM**

## Last Week's solutions

5	9	8	2	6	3	7	1	4
2	4	3	1	9	7	6	5	8
7	1	6	8	5	4	9	3	2
8	7	4	3	2	6	1	9	5
9	6	5	4	1	8	3	2	7
1	3	2	9	7	5	8	4	6
3	2	7	6	4	1	5	8	9
6	8	9	5	3	2	4	7	1
4	5	1	7	8	9	2	6	3

Difficulty:  
**EASY**

4	1	7	5	8	3	6	2	9
6	8	5	1	9	2	7	4	3
2	3	9	7	6	4	1	8	5
8	7	6	3	4	1	5	9	2
3	5	2	9	7	8	4	6	1
9	4	1	2	5	6	3	7	8
7	6	3	8	1	9	2	5	4
1	9	4	6	2	5	8	3	7
5	2	8	4	3	7	9	1	6

Difficulty:  
**MEDIUM**

## FE Week mini-mascot

Follow the adventures of *FE Week's* biggest and smallest fan!



*"Mostly this week I have been making sandcastles in Scotland"*

You can also follow our *FE Week* mini-mascot on Twitter @daniellinford